

AN  
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
COMMON SENSE AND UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE  
PEOPLE.

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AN

A D D R E S S

TO THE

COMMON SENSE AND UNDERSTANDING

OF THE

P E O P L E;

SHEWING, THAT THE REPEAL OF THE

T E S T A C T

MUST BE NECESSARILY ATTENDED WITH  
THE GREATEST DANGERS

BOTH TO

C H U R C H   A N D   S T A T E.

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AS the disputes at this time run so high between the Church and the Dissenters concerning a Repeal of the Test Act, and as it is evident, that every endeavour is now used by the Dissenters, to overthrow the present Establishment of the Church of England; I must take the liberty to say, That whenever they are able to carry that point, the State itself will totter, and, at last, fall into ruins; nor can it be denied on  
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any good ground, that the repealing of the Corporation and Test Acts will infallibly bring about this event; as they were designed for the security and support of the Established Constitution in Church and State.—We have the comfort to know, that this can never happen until Government refuses its Aid, and fails to cherish and protect the present Establishment; I believe, every Dissenter will allow, that some Establishment or other is necessary for its very existence; if it were not so, what innumerable Sects would spring up, and by their uncontrouled vices, passions and follies, root up the foundations of all Religion and Morality whatever.

The Dissenters say, What has Government to do with the religious Principles of the People? The answer is obvious, and if it were not so strenuously insisted upon, would merit no reply—The truth lies here—our religious Tenets, and civil Interests are so intimately connected, and are so united in one bond, that it is impossible to separate them; if it be allowed, that there must be an Establishment, then it must follow, that Tests and Subscriptions must necessarily be required, whereby the true Friends may readily be distinguished, and their Principles as easily discovered.

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The Test Act, which is now of such importance to Church and State, was passed in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Charles the Second, and in the year of our Lord, 1673, and ordained, that all Persons who shall bear any Offices or Places under his Majesty, shall take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and receive the Sacrament according to the usage of the Church of England; and whoever shall refuse to take the Oaths and the Sacrament as aforesaid, shall be judged incapable of any Office. The design of this Act is manifestly to guard against the Dissenters gaining too great an interest, or carrying too much weight in the Legislative Powers of this Country

Four or five years after passing the Test Act in 1673, there was a Bill brought in for the Relief of the Dissenters, and this, they say, was a proof of the desire of the Houses of Parliament to free them from the Inconveniences of it, and make them capable of holding the Offices of the State; but the truth is, it was designed only to exempt them from the penalties of the Law which hung over them in common with the Papists; such as, for not coming to Church and conforming to the Established Worship; which penalties the Act of

Toleration has compleatly swept away: so that they may now worship God according to their own forms, ceremonies, and religious Institutions. And though the Legislature has removed all the difficulties the Dissenters could possibly lie under from the Penal Laws, yet at the same time, it clearly intended, that if they did not conform, by taking the Sacrament according to the usage of the Church of England, they should not take upon them any Civil or Military Offices, but should remain to be disabled by the Test Act so to do.

It appears also, in the Reign of King James the Second, what were the real sentiments of the Prince of Orange, (afterwards King William) respecting the abolition of the Test Act; when he was requested to give his approbation of it, the answer of the Prince and Princess of Orange, was, that they did not see how it could be expected they should consent to such abrogation, to which they had so just an aversion, as being contrary to the laws and customs of all Christian States, whether Protestants or Papists, who admitted none to a share of the Government or public employments, but those who professed the Public and Established Religion, and endeavoured to secure it from all attempts whatever. In



In April, 1689, the two Houses addressed his Majesty after he came upon the Throne, with thanks for his declarations and repeated assurances, that he would maintain the Church of England, established by Law, praying him so to do, by which, he would effectually establish his Throne. And as to the Dissenters, they promised to proceed to the Considerations of giving them Ease: the King, the next day, delivered his answer to the House of Lords, repeating his assurances, that he was resolved to support the Church, and he was happy to be in a station able to defend it, and he hoped, the Ease they designed to give to the Dissenters, would remove the differences and mutual animosities between them; but we do not find that any room was left for their admission into the Offices of the State without the proper Qualifications:—Thus were the bounds between the Church and the Dissenters settled after the Revolution, when there was every disposition to favour them, and in any way which could be with safety admitted.

The Act of Union, in the sixth year of Queen Anne, declares, that all and singular Acts of Parliament then in force for the establishment and  
 preservation



preservation of the Church of England,, and the  
 Doctrines, Worship, Discipline, and Government  
 thereof, shall remain in full force, and is declared  
 to be an essential and fundamental part of the  
 Union between the Kingdoms. There was an Act  
 also passed in the tenth year of Queen Anne, which  
 is called, An Act for preserving the Protestant  
 Religion by better securing the Church of England  
 as by Law Established, and declares, Whereas, an  
 Act was made in the thirteenth year of the reign  
 of King Charles the Second, intituled, an Act  
 for the well governing and regulating Corpora-  
 tions; and another Act in the five and twentieth  
 year of the said reign, intituled, An Act for pre-  
 venting dangers which may happen from Popish  
 Recusants; both which Acts were made for the  
 security of the Church of England, as by Law  
 Established; and recites, “ Be it enacted, if any  
 “ Officer, Civil or Military, &c. who receives any  
 “ Salary, or if any Magistrate of a Corporation,  
 “ &c. who by the Acts of the thirteenth or twen-  
 “ ty-fifth of Charles the Second, are obliged to  
 “ receive the Sacrament, shall after their admission  
 “ into their Office, and during their Office be  
 “ present in any Conventicle, shall forfeit *forty*  
 “ *pounds*, and when convicted, shall be disabled to  
 “ hold

“ hold his Office, and incapable of any employment in England, &c.” We must observe, that this Act refers to two others of Charles the Second, and is continued with an intent to secure the Church, as by Law Established: and also, to keep the Dissenters of every denomination out of Offices, Civil and Military, and out of the Government of Corporations; and their reasons are founded upon this Confidence, that they must in their hearts be Enemies to the religious part of the Constitution, and which is so inseparably united with the State, that you cannot weaken the one, without shaking the very foundations of the other,

The Dissenters then thought themselves happy in the indulgences given them by the Toleration—they asked no more—and seemingly wanted no more; but we now see them making open and hasty strides for Equality, as they term it; but in fact, for Superiority; and which will prove to be the case, if the Barrier be once thrown down between us. It may, perhaps, prove a mutual misfortune to both Parties, that their exertions are not used at this time upon a religious profession, which was formerly held out as their only object; but they have now discovered, that Ambition and Interest are

are the real motives for them. A Dissenter must be very ignorant, or cannot be serious, if he holds out, that if all religions were equally indulged in this Country, it would be a solid foundation for unanimity, peace, and concord between us; as it must be the very reverse: nor can we believe him, if he says, that he feels no desire of propagating his own religious Principles; that he looks for no Emoluments; but that he wishes for the Abolition of the Test Act, as it will contribute to the good of the People at large.—This is a doctrine, wherever held, so opposite to the general experience and feelings of human nature, that it deserves not to have the least credit paid to it.

Is it not reasonable to think and expect, that that they would (if armed with sufficient power) endeavour to humble our Established Church, and to exalt their own in its room? They did abuse their power when they had it in their hands; and why should they not again? Did they not, in the reign of Charles the First, impose a solemn League and Covenant, when they were assured that the Members of the Church of England could not comply with it? they violently deprived them of their Preferments, and sequestered their Tem-  
poral

poral Estates; they harraſed them both by the Civil and Military Power; they forbid them the Uſe, of the Liturgy of the Church, even in private: and for ſuch offences, they levied fines, and impriſoned their Perſons—Theſe Punishments were inflicted, 'till the People who had been blind, opened their Eyes, and almoſt with one mind, and one voice, reſtored King Charles the Second to the Throne; when the Church recovered her Rights again.

It may be ſaid by the Diſſenters of theſe days, that it is illiberal, and even unjuſt, to ſuſpect that they would now act, as their Forefathers did, towards us; all I can ſay is, we can never ſtand too much upon our guard, as the modern Diſſenters publicly profeſs the ſame religious opinions, and ſhew the ſame zeal and ardour for the Propagation and Eſtabliſhment of them. They are now inviting their Brethren of Ireland and Scotland to unite with them, as in one Body, and in one common cauſe, and declare, That no Candidate ſhall have a Vote from them to be returned as a Member of the next Parliament, but who will give his promiſe of voting for the repeal of the Teſt; nor have they in any of their writings, which I have

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seen, ever condemned the persecuting Principles of their Predecessors; so far from it, that the characters of the Dissenters who were the most zealous, and who had engaged in the most violent measures, have been handed down to Posterity, as examples worthy to imitate: and that they were even Men whom the World could not set too high a value upon.

I have a Paper now before me, which in the year 1780, was industriously dispersed, and put into the hands of many people of our Established Church, and this clearly shews the views, tempers, and disposition of the Dissenters at that time, it is called, "*A declaration of Rights, without which no Englishman can be a Free Man, nor the English Nation a Free People,*" It evidently stirs up Sedition, endeavouring to work upon weak minds; telling the Poor, *That they have an equal Right, but more need, to elect Representatives, than the Rich; and robbed of Liberty, is Poor indeed.* It further tells you, *That by the operation of one unconstitutional Statute of the 8th. of Henry the Sixth, It is enacted, on false pretences, that a very great majority of Englishmen are tyrannically debarred of their Birth-right of voting for Members of Parliament: and thus Englishmen are degraded to a level with the very Cattle in*  
the



*the Field, or the Sheep in the Fold, which have no voice to say, Why are we bought and sold? Why are we yoked and laden with heavy Burthens? Why are we fleeced and led to the Slaughter? It then calls on their Friends, Countrymen, and Fellow Citizens, to associate in a common Cause, and then through Committees to let their sober resolutions flow to one common Centre; and then to be laid before that House of Parliament, which lives but by the Breath, and is bound to serve and defend the majesty, of the People; and then religiously concludes, Glory to God in the highest, on Earth, Peace, good will towards Men.*

All comments upon this must be unnecessary; but I am happy to find that this Pestilential Breath has not yet had the Effects upon the Parliament, which they expected; and as it may die a natural death, I sincerely hope, that such a Parliament will then be returned as will tend to support his present Majesty on the Throne, with all its Dignity; and as strenuously defend the just Rights and Liberties of the People. And whatever the wishes of the Dissenters may be, surely it is a dangerous and an unwarrantable expedient to appeal to the People at large, and to call forth the Passions of the lower Order and Ranks to our assistance; or

to charge Government with the oppression of the common rights of Mankind :—These cannot be the proper means of seeking redress against the hardships so much complained of.

I think they shew their Intemperate Zeal, and I am sure, a want of Judgment, in sending a printed Paper at this time addressed to the Clergy of the County of Suffolk, and signed, *Friend to Christianity*. I must observe, that if he thought of doing good, the manner of addressing us was Indecent, and an unlikely means of effecting it. He accuses us of prostituting the Sacred Elements to Men who receive them for mercenary purposes; and then plainly tells us, that they do nothing but increase their own damnation. He does not say *bring*, but *increase*, the damnation; which he must charitably suppose to be already on their heads; and observes also, that we, as Clergy, increase a burthen on our own Consciences, and a reproach to our sacred Office, by prostituting the Sacred Elements to them; and then styles himself a Friend to Christianity! The answer I shall give, shall be in the words of an Apostle, the authority of which I suppose he will not dispute, “ *Let not him that Eateth, despise him that Eateth not; and let not him that*  
*“ Eateth*

*"Eateth not, Judge him that Eateth. Who art thou  
 "that judgest another Man's Servant? to his own  
 "Master he standeth or falleth."*

As the Dissenters are now united as in one body, and publicly stand forth, and make use of every engine to obtain the repeal of the Test Act, which marks the bounds between us and them, and is such a Gulph as the violent part of them can never pass over; it equally behoves the true Friends of the Church and State, to unite also, and oppose the abolition of it; as it was originally intended. (and the same reasons hold now) to guard against their gaining too great an interest, or carrying too much weight in the Legislative Powers in this Country; and which must be the inevitable consequence, if it should be abolished: for if, by their influence, they can obtain a Repeal of it; by the same influence, they will be able to obtain a majority in Parliament on other occasions: and if so, is it not reasonable to think, or is it not reduced to a certainty, that with such a majority they would eagerly seize the first opportunity of changing the Civil Establishment, and endeavour to invite the Crown to the Establishment of their own Religion, their Rites and Ceremonies; and  
 that

that they should be the Eſtabliſhed forms in this Kingdom: but at all events, as they are a rich and opulent Body, they will not fail to create ſuch an intereſt in this Country as will contribute to promote their Ends, and carry all their purpoſes. It may be thought by careleſs Obſervers, that it is very unlikely they ſhould in theſe days be able to make ſuch ſtrides, or to gain ſuch power; but did not theſe Events happen in the reign of Charles the Firſt, when there were unforeſeen, and not even ſuſpected by the Bulk of the People; ſo that all reſiſtance became vain, and they overturned the whole Conſtitution.

It muſt be acknowledged, that the moſt happy Effects have been long experienced by the Liberties of the People, and the Prerogative of the Crown having been ſo clearly aſcertained, and both of them limited by the Laws which have effectually prevented the confuſion which muſt otherwiſe have ariſen.

And I muſt obſerve, that whenever the Diſſenters ſhall have weight and authority ſufficient to repeal the Teſt Act; or the Church and State ſhall infringe, or endeavour to deprive the Diſſenters



centers of the Liberties which the Toleration gives that this Country will soon feel the most dreadful Consequences; such as must inevitably bring upon it all that train of mischief which is now so effectually guarded against.





